



Master Plan 2023

City of North Canton, Ohio

Made Possible by The Hoover Foundation

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FORWARD

The history of North Canton's local government began in 1906 with the organization of the first Village Council. Mr. William H. Hoover, of his company by the same name, served as the Village's first Mayor and had recently acquired the rights to the patent on suction sweepers, otherwise known as vacuum cleaners. Little did William, or the Village, know just how large the Hoover Company would become. Over the next 100 years, the Village and the company grew together. This was North Canton's first century. A century of growth, establishment, and identity building. North Canton became a premier locality in Stark County and the funds from the Hoover Company helped build critical infrastructure, parks, services, and the number one school district in the County. Unfortunately, it could not last forever.

In 2007, the final jobs from the Hoover Company left North Canton. Like many similarly situated first-ring suburban communities in the American rust belt, the city has lost its largest employer and the income tax that supported the city's services. This led to austerity measures; cutting budgets, staff, and non-essential services. For a decade, North Canton focused primarily on simply maintaining services while the income tax base was rebuilt. Today, the income tax base has returned in force, growing not only during normal years but also through the COVID-19 pandemic. New businesses have occupied much of the old Hoover factory complex, and redevelopment is quickly occurring throughout the city. As North Canton exits this period of transition, it looks forward to the second century of redevelopment, growth, and prosperity.

Planning for the Second Century

The core question of the master planning process is "How do we continue to make North Canton a great place to live, work, and play?" This carries with it many related and inseparable questions that fill in important details. How do we anticipate the kind of community people want to live in? What type of redevelopment should be encouraged? Discouraged? How do we maintain the high standard of infrastructure and services established during the Hoover era? What has worked elsewhere? What can we achieve within the resources available?

Attempting to begin finding answers to these questions is the heart of the planning process. Neither this plan, nor any of those that came before, or any that will come after, fully and completely build a blueprint for the city's future. Instead, the plans are simply the best ideas city leaders could identify at that moment in time, to move towards the greatest community possible. Some, all, or none, of the recommendations included in this plan, may ever be accomplished, but they demonstrate the city's vision to create the best community possible. The first step is to build on what's working. North Canton has a well-known identity as a safe community with excellent schools and well-maintained parks, streets, and infrastructure. This plan seeks to build on this foundation to ensure a bright future.

As a public entity, the City is supported not by profits from selling some good or service but by taxes. The continued success of the City will be determined by its ability to maintain and increase the income tax base. This means encouraging economic development and redevelopment, bringing in new jobs, and protecting property values. The planning process is intended to identify proposals that will not only provide direct benefits to residents and businesses but achieve the goal of tax base protection. In turn, a strong tax base will then support the many vital city programs not explicitly discussed in this plan such as police, fire/EMS, parks, street paving, and storm sewers.

MASTER PLAN BACKGROUND

The North Canton Master Plan is a road map for the future over the next ten to twenty years. This plan identifies community and economic recommendations, as well as recommendations for improving city services and public facilities. The plan was developed by the City of North Canton with broad community participation. Regular updates to these plans are imperative to align with development or infrastructure needs as local conditions change.

North Canton's last master plan was completed in 2012, and to date, most priorities from that plan have been addressed, accomplished, or ruled out for various reasons. Since the 2012 plan, the city has also developed a University District Plan in 2016 in conjunction with Walsh University and a Parks Expansion Plan in 2018. Some of the recommendations from these plans have been, or are being, implemented. An updated Master Plan is needed to tie previous planning efforts together, address gaps in these plans, and establish actionable recommendations.

Purpose and Scope

This Master Plan details recommendations for actions of the local North Canton government to help strengthen the community and continually improve into the future. Although the actions of the school district, private developers, and ordinary citizens will play a major role in continuing the make North Canton a great place to live, work, and play, this plan focuses only on activities within the power of North Canton city government or its agents. The city should always work collaboratively with other stakeholders for the benefit of North Canton residents.

Based on the community survey in 2021, sixty percent of residents are pleased with the current direction of the city, and seventy-eight percent plan to stay for the next five years. Through a series of interviews and meetings during the master planning process, community members identified four priorities for the city's future:

Goals and Objectives

1. Build a vibrant downtown core.
2. Cultivate a business-friendly community.
3. Strengthen the North Canton community identity.
4. Maintain and Improve high standards for city services.

Development Process

The Master Planning development process included the input and support of many talented individuals and community members. The city contracted with the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative of Kent State University (CUDC) to collect and analyze data on existing conditions, and to understand recent planning and development efforts. This included interviewing 16 community stakeholders, meeting with a citizen steering committee, and facilitating a community conversation to understand local priorities and concerns. The CUDC also explored ideas and best practices from other communities that could be translated to conditions in North Canton. The Steering Committee and the CUDC developed initial ideas and alternatives in response to community input. These alternatives were discussed in public workshops and then summarized in a draft master plan document, which was reviewed and refined by City Council and other city officials.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In pursuit of the goals identified by the North Canton community, the Master Plan identifies a number of policy recommendations for city leadership's consideration in three broad categories: Community, Economy, and Services. Though simple, these categories encompass the core areas of local government's influence in shaping life in North Canton. The following is an overview of the ideas presented in this plan.

Community

1. Active Pedestrian Core

Creating a vibrant downtown means bringing people into the downtown for events, shopping, public spaces, and more. This section identifies ways to make the city's core more appealing to pedestrians through infrastructure and programming.

2. Pride of Place

Strengthening North Canton's identity means not only the reputation of the local government, but how residents and businesses feel and think about the city and their neighborhood. This section includes ideas for connecting residents more deeply to their neighborhoods and fellow residents.

3. The Walsh Connection

Walsh University is an incredible asset for North Canton but can often feel disconnected from the rest of the city. Improving connections between the two can make the local community, and the university community, one.

Economy

1. Downtown Support

Supporting local businesses is an important part of protecting North Canton's economy. This section identifies potential policies to help make operating a business in North Canton easier.

2. Redevelopment with Purpose

North Canton is a small city with limited potential for new development. This section explores how the city can make the most of the land available.

3. Opening the Door

New businesses and residents drive continued growth. This section identifies ways to help make moving your family or business to North Canton a clear choice.

Services

1. Safety Services

North Canton's safety services are top-notch, but as the city continues to grow, so do the responsibilities of first responders. This section considers how best to support these vital services in the future.

2. Development Services

North Canton's building and permit processes had past challenges. This section identifies policies to improve processes and streamline the permitting process for residents.

3. Community Broadband

Access to the internet has become necessary for modern life. This section explores how the city can help ensure this vital resource is accessible to residents and businesses.



COMMUNITY

2023 City Master Plan

City of North Canton, Ohio



COMMUNITY

Active Pedestrian Core

The great theme throughout the city's planning efforts has been the promotion of an active pedestrian core. Development patterns of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, saw the demolition of many of the old Village buildings close to the street with varied storefronts in favor of a more automobile-centric development pattern. While this contributed greatly to the expansion and development of North Canton, the city lost some of its small-town character in the process. Throughout the master planning process, a strong desire to recapture the old "New Berlin" downtown core as a lively place for people to socialize and enjoy and walk to restaurants, shops, and offices was clear. Achieving this vision requires not only attractions to draw people downtown, but the infrastructure to help them get there.

The Pedestrian Square

The largest social events in North Canton are anchored by two key locations; The town square located at the intersection of Main and Maple Streets and the North Canton School District campus located on either side of 7th Street at Wise Avenue. These locations currently feel separate from each other but are less than one half-mile apart. In addition, these locations are near many other North Canton attractions including City Hall, the YMCA, Dogwood Park and Pool, and the North Canton Public Library, just to name a few. These institutional areas form the heart of North Canton and connecting them provides the perfect opportunity for dedicated pedestrian infrastructure investment.

Proposed Pedestrian Square Map



MAP KEY:

- A. Town Square, DORA District, And Bitzer Park
- B. City Hall and Police Department
- C. North Canton Public Library
- D. North Canton Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Festival Grounds
- E. North Canton YMCA
- F. Historic Hoover West Factory
- G. Witwer Park And North Canton Community Garden
- H. New K-2 School
- I. YMCA Childcare Center
- J. Fire Station 1
- K. Diebold-Nixdorf New Factory
- L. Dogwood Park and Playground
- M. Fire Station 2
- N. Dogwood Pool and Stark Parks Trail Access
- O. Hoover High School
- P. Memorial Stadium and Bus Garage
- Q. Clearmount School

A rough square of streets formed by Maple, North Main, 7th, and Wise could be enhanced with street beautification and pedestrian-focused improvements to create a pedestrian-friendly square in the center of North Canton. North Main and Maple Streets already have wide decorative sidewalks and streetlights that enable pedestrians to move easily. Extending these improvements down 7th Street from Main to Wise and for the entire length of Wise Avenue Northeast would connect the city's two major gathering spaces, many of the city's most important institutions, and even tie into the existing Stark Parks trail system next to Dogwood Pool. The pedestrian square would be within a half-mile (10-minute walk) of forty percent of the city's population according to 2020 Census data and within a one-mile (20-minute walk) of more than eighty percent. When anticipated development patterns of the adjacent properties including the School District's Facilities Master Plan, the hopeful development of the Hoover District, and the completion of the Diebold-Nixdorf expansion are considered, the square would make the possibility of walking to work, school, and businesses a much stronger option for many residents. Residents of walkable neighborhoods tend to be healthier, both physically and mentally. Walkable destinations lead to less traffic and air pollution and higher home values.

Investments in pedestrian infrastructure, including more decorative sidewalks and crosswalks, lighting, and streetlights with buttons for pedestrian traffic, would boost walkability and make the area more attractive for residents and businesses. The future development of sidewalk cafes and retail as envisioned by the city's new Main Street Center Zoning, which covers most of the square, would strengthen walkability over time by bringing pedestrian activities to storefronts. In planning for the creation of the square, the city should establish a unified look for streetscape improvements that are functional for businesses, residents, and long-term maintenance. Considerations should include streetlamps that include frosted glass to provide light but reduce light pollution in residences or that may blind drivers, and brick alternative decorative elements such as stamped concrete that can provide a similar look but are less prone to damage. The streetscape improvements can be coupled with an expansion of the signage efforts started as part of the 2012 Master Plan to guide pedestrians to major attractions such as Memorial Stadium or the Stark Parks Trail.



Programming

Four-season events and programming will draw people to the downtown area to enhance vitality and support local businesses. City residents have a well-established history of supporting festivals, parades, and other events. The success of the annual Main Street Festival and other events like Summer Series, Market 720, Winterfest, and the North Canton Chocolate Walk, demonstrate a substantial audience for civic programming. Additional programming, including events that target a younger audience, is likely to be forthcoming and help build North Canton's community identity.



DORA

The city's establishment of a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) was an important step in supporting local events by allowing businesses to play a more active role in providing refreshments. As the downtown area continues to develop, the city may wish to expand the DORA's boundaries. If redevelopment occurs at the intersection of Charlotte and Main Streets or further along North Main to the intersection of 7th and Main, it would be prudent to expand the DORA along the proposed pedestrian square to further contribute to the area's walkability.

Program Support

Time and energy are required to support a year-round series of events. Staff time is needed to coordinate road closures, temporary liquor permits, sanitation services, and more. The city could consider establishing a new position for marketing and events coordination to activate and promote the downtown district and events throughout the city. The coordinator could work with local business owners and the Chamber of Commerce to find sponsorships and volunteers to bring these events to life. The coordinator could help promote these events through marketing efforts including the city's social media. A dedicated staff member would help support the many amazing community events put on by community organizations such as the Chamber, Library, and YMCA.

Downtown Parking Strategy

Although there are many parking lots in the downtown area, there is no public parking available to support a pedestrian-centric atmosphere. The city should consider the acquisition of properties near Main Street for the creation of public parking that could support denser pedestrian-focused development as part of its land-banking efforts (See page 15). To preserve valuable commercial space lots should not be located with Main Street frontage. Wayfinding signage for parking is crucial. Entry points to public parking areas should be clearly marked and visible from Main Street. A cohesive signage and wayfinding project could direct people to parking areas and highlight local attractions.

Pride of Place

North Canton residents have incredible pride in their city and their neighborhoods. In the 2021 bi-annual North Canton Community survey, ninety-three percent of respondents reported that they enjoy their neighborhood. This is not only reflective of the amazing people who call North Canton home, but of the sense of identity the city has as a community. Reflecting this community identity through public space improvements and recognition can reinforce residents' pride of place and motivate new residents to join the community. Such improvements, although simple, have been shown to increase property values and community health.

Community Beautification Awards

There are many incredible residents that go above and beyond to contribute to the beauty of the community, but too often go unrecognized. To recognize these property owners, the city should develop a seasonal awards program for residents who have gone the extra mile. Residents could nominate their own properties or their neighbors' properties with winners selected seasonally (spring, summer, fall, winter) by the city's ward council members; each member chooses one property from their ward. The winners could be showcased on the city's website and receive documentation of their award from Council's Office through a proclamation from the President of Council.

Expanding Opportunities for Older Residents

North Canton was previously ranked as the seventh-best retirement community in the State of Ohio, though not by intention. People move to the city and stay. A testament to the city's excellent services and community. Because of the commitment of residents to make North Canton home for life, North Canton functions as a naturally occurring retirement community (NORC). A NORC is a community that wasn't expressly built for older adults but now has a large population of seniors who have stayed in their homes as they aged.

To support an aging population, the city should expand its services and activities to help older adults thrive. The city and local organizations such as the North Canton Public Library and YMCA can coordinate a broad range of health and social services to help support older residents in their own homes. Older residents should have opportunities to participate in the design, implementation, and prioritization of services and activities. The city has already begun creating these programs through its partnership with the North Canton Library In Motion senior programming at the North Canton Civic Center twice a week. To focus on program development, the city should utilize the eight domains of livability developed by the AARP. These include housing alternatives; parks and public spaces; transportation alternatives, and programs that allow people of all ages to remain connected to their community.

The Walsh Connection

Walsh University is a major employer and an important educational asset in the City of North Canton. The campus is largely self-contained regarding the housing of students, but many students frequently leave campus for food and entertainment. The University is roughly two miles from the downtown core, and the shopping development, Washington Square, sits directly across the street from the campus. With so much retail nearby, members of the university community have little need to visit the downtown area, yet frequently pass through it to reach Belden Village and beyond. By linking the University District and downtown core more tightly together, Main Street will be enlivened by students, faculty, and staff.



Physical Connections

Pedestrian lighting, signage, and a path are already in place along Maple Avenue heading west from the campus, but these streetscape enhancements stop before they reach downtown. Completing the connection between the university district and the downtown area may encourage more people to make the walk, especially in nice weather when events are scheduled downtown. Extending the streetscape enhancements between Taft and Marquardt would create some visual continuity along the city's second-most travel roadway and can be scaled down to complement the residential context where appropriate. Maple Street is likely not wide enough to accommodate bike lanes, but a widened sidewalk could function as a multi-purpose path for the many students who bring bikes to campus.

Business Connections

In addition to improving the physical connection, the city could encourage more student-centric business activities by supporting efforts to expand students' ability to use flex dollars from university meal plans at local restaurants, attract students to downtown events like the New Berlin Festival that will be happening during the academic year, and by continuing the city's internship program.





ECONOMY

2023 City Master Plan

City of North Canton, Ohio



ECONOMY

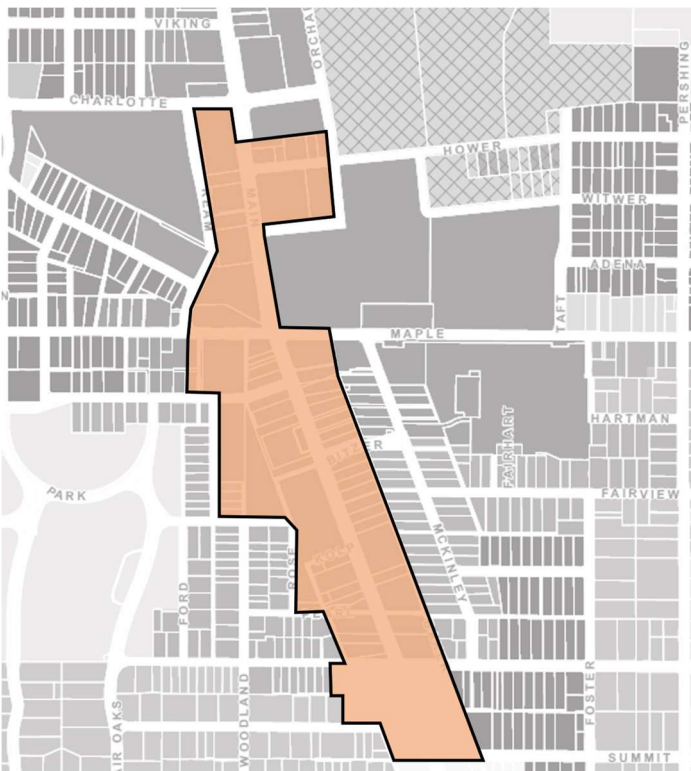
The City of North Canton is a strong and well-established community of choice in Stark County. Businesses want to locate in the city, and even those in the surrounding townships advertise themselves as North Canton. The city has a lot to offer prospective businesses: well-maintained infrastructure, excellent municipal services, and reliable safety forces--all things that entrepreneurs look for when determining where to locate their businesses. In addition, North Canton has a well-regarded school system and many parks and recreational opportunities. Business owners realize that for their company to be successful, they need to be located in a community where current and future workers will want to work, live, and raise their families. North Canton fits the bill on all counts. However, as North Canton looks to redevelop for its second century, it will need to develop programs to compete with surrounding townships where land is more readily available for development and no income tax exists.

Downtown Support

North Canton's downtown is both the community and business heart of North Canton. Main Street is the economic engine that drives the city. In order to support pedestrian-focused redevelopment, in line with the city's new Main Street Zoning, services focused on this area will be needed.

Special Improvement District

Maintaining the public right-of-way, and particularly the sidewalk can be a difficult and expensive task for businesses. When maintained properly, streetscape improvements can greatly enhance the walkability of a neighborhood and increase business and customer satisfaction. When maintained poorly, broken sidewalks and weeds can discourage customers and hurt adjoining businesses.



To help local businesses with the burden of maintaining public sidewalks, the city, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, should promote the establishment of a special improvement district for the city's downtown core. A Special Improvement District (SID) is an area, established pursuant to Ohio Revised Code, in which property owners elect to pay an additional assessment to fund improvements and services that benefit the district. The services are chosen by the property owners themselves, through a Board of Directors, and cannot replace services provided by the city such as water.

The proposed downtown SID could provide at least three key services for Main Street business: sidewalk maintenance and replacement, snow and ice removal from sidewalks, and snow and ice removal from parking lots. By aggregating the needs of many businesses together, the SID can bid them as a single contract instead of each

company seeking its own contractor and managing its own services. With a large volume of clients, the total price would likely be lower than each business on its own. Other business development services may be provided by the SID in the future.

Establishing a SID requires the approval of owners representing sixty percent of the front footage or seventy-five percent of the total land area of the district, who must sign a formal petition to establish it. As such, the establishment of a SID might have to wait until there is more of a critical mass of participating businesses in the downtown core. Depending on how the district is drawn, North Canton City Hall could even participate as a SID member.

Business Survey and Workshops

Redevelopment of the city's core will only be successful with meaningful input from the city's businesses operating in the area. While the city frequently receives input from residents, it much less frequently hears from businesses.

Business Survey

The City of North Canton already operates a successful and effective community survey program for residents. This survey is conducted every odd-numbered year and receives more than 1,000 responses. The city should replicate this program with a focus on businesses instead of residents in even-numbered years. The city should craft a survey catering to the needs of the business community and their perception of city services. The data from this survey can then be used in conjunction with data from the resident surveys to provide a full view of the city service delivery and perception.

Business Owner Workshops

While surveys are excellent tools for baseline information, they are difficult to create properly to receive informed opinions and suggestions regarding specific policy issues such as development incentives, zoning changes, or partnership programs. To bring the feedback of local businesses into these more nuanced discussions, city leaders should host business workshops wherein businesses are invited to share their ideas and feedback on potential business-focused city programs. These forums could be hosted in the North Canton Civic Center.

Façade Grants

North Canton is in many ways a historic town. The buildings store in their foundations the history of the Village of New Berlin and the city's development over the last century. This historic sense of place is part of what gives North Canton its small-town feel and community. However, as time passes facades fade, bricks age, and signs become outdated. To help local businesses maintain their storefront, the city should establish a façade grant program. The program can be run through the city's Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) and provide funds, up to \$10,000 to local businesses to improve and renovate Main Street facades. The program could also be tied to specified design standards for approved renovations helping to promote a more cohesive look for North Canton's main corridor, particularly in the downtown area. If grants are too costly, the city could begin on a smaller scale by establishing a program to waive permit and inspection fees for renovations that meet the established design standards. Either of these programs would incentivize cohesive development design, but not punish those businesses that do not wish to conform to the unified appearance.



Redevelopment with Purpose

North Canton as a community is functionally landlocked. This means that there is little opportunity for the annexation of surrounding areas. Most of the immediately surrounding area is either already part of Canton or forms an important part of the tax base of neighboring townships. In addition to being landlocked, the city is primarily built out. Little usable vacant land remains in the city for development. Because of these factors, North Canton's primary path forward for economic growth is through the redevelopment of existing properties. To really achieve the goals of the community, redevelopment must be done with the purpose of preserving existing community institutions while encouraging newcomers to locate within the city.

Strategic Land banking

North Canton learned the hard way that if the community does not control the land, it does not really control the project. Several proposed developments from the past two decades never materialized or did not meet the community's expectations. In 2020, the city began the policy of land banking (aggregating parcels of land for future sale or development). The city had two specific priorities in acquiring property for its landbank.

1. Vacant commercial properties for business development.
2. Underutilized residential properties along Main Street for consolidation and redevelopment into commercial space.

To date, the city, and its agent, the CIC, have purchased numerous strategically located properties in North Canton's commercial corridors including the 31-acre site at 1447 North Main Street, the former Kmart location to be the home of a new Meijer store. By continuing to landbank strategic properties, the city can take an active role in shaping the redevelopment of the city and prevent the underwhelming developments of the recent past. The redevelopment of properties in the land bank will contribute to the economic, social, and environmental betterment of the city.

Development Incentives

Commercial properties are not the only structures ripe for redevelopment in North Canton. Home buyers want to be in North Canton. This is evident from the low supply of homes, the short time homes stay on the market before purchase, and the speed at which the remaining residential areas have been developed. Unfortunately, much of the city's housing stock was built before 1980, particularly in the city's center, and many post-war G.I. homes lack the space and amenities modern home buyers desire. The city should consider incentives for owner-occupants to purchase and rehabilitate aging housing stock. Such incentives could help first-time homebuyers customize their homes to their preferences and build a life in the community.

Amending the City's Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) would be the easiest way for North Canton to incentivize home renovations without establishing a revolving loan program, or another fund that would require financial and administrative staff to administer. The CRA offers property tax incentives for renovations of residential or commercial property. Under the current rules, the CRA's eligibility is effectively unattainable for most residents as it would



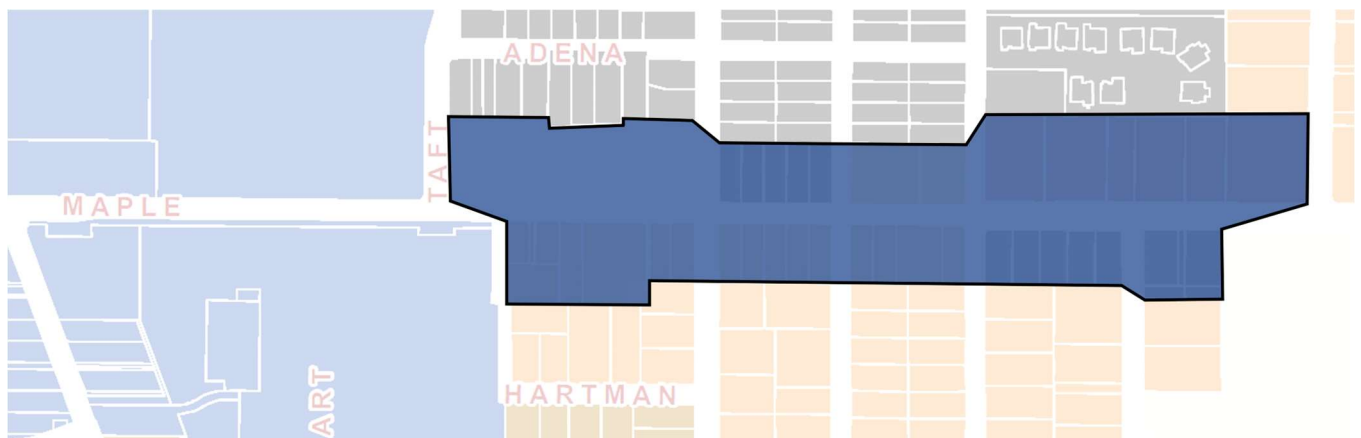
require spending upwards of \$500,000 to purchase a home, demolish it, and rebuild. The City should consider an additional CRA with a lower required value of improvements that will be more accessible to current homeowners. Previous CRA programs at this level had been opposed by school district officials due to the loss of property tax revenue to the school district. To mitigate this issue, the city should negotiate with the school district for a lower amount and term of abatement that is acceptable to all parties. Current exemptions are set at one hundred percent of the added value for twelve years but could be lowered to a smaller percentage and/or a shorter time frame. This more accessible CRA would hopefully be used by more residents encouraging improvements in housing stock and ultimately supporting the tax base of the school district and the city through higher property values.

Zoning Changes

Perhaps the most powerful tool the city can use to influence future redevelopment is zoning regulations. In 2020, North Canton overhauled and updated its Main Street zoning code. The updated code establishes zoning districts for the five unique segments of the Main Street Corridor and focuses on mixed-used development to address both the city's commercial and residential needs. To build upon this code the city should consider expanding the new Main Street Zoning regulations away from Main Street. North Canton has very limited opportunities for commercial development, and expanding mixed-use opportunities into areas beyond Main Street is a good way to expand commercial areas while preserving residential units. These expansions would be tangential to Main Street along existing major road corridors. The rezoning of these properties also has the potential to significantly increase property values for current owners.

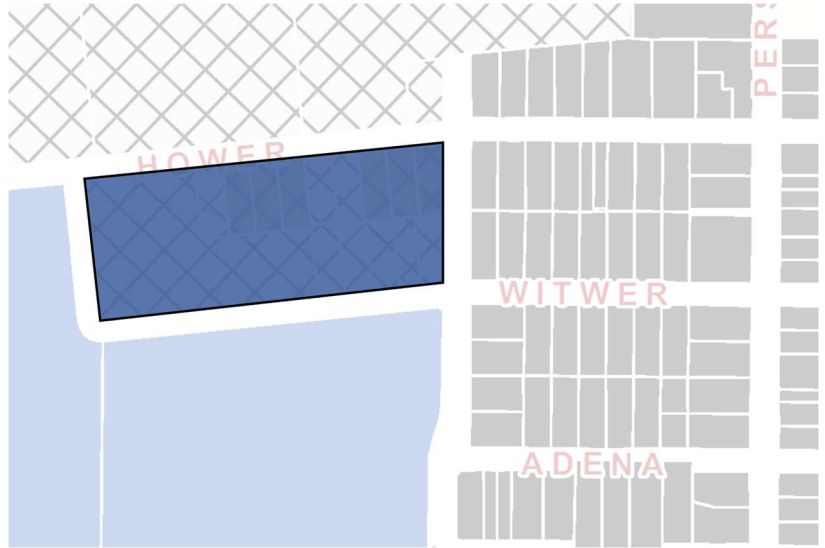
1. East Along East Maple Street

The most natural extension of commercial zoning would be to extend the Main Street Central district (MS-C) east along East Maple. Street to encompass the areas fronting East Maple. Many of these properties are already utilized as businesses. For any future redevelopment, the rezoning would prevent the construction of homes and driveways on busy East Maple where existing homes already have difficulty with entering and exiting lots. MS-C zoning could be extended along both sides of East Maple until the Clearmont school property on the South side and Sutton Street on the North side. This would create natural barriers between commercial development and residential uses further along East Maple and encompass existing office and general business areas.



2. Hower and Witwer Block of Historic Hoover District

Behind the Hoover District is a single formerly residential block that currently has several vacant parcels and a few remaining homes. The block is currently zoned light industrial with a mixed-use overlay and three properties zoned R2F. Rezoning this block to MS-C would be a natural extension of the city's existing MS-C zoning and prevent the construction of industrial uses next to the residential properties just across Taft Street.



Zoning Rewrite

The city should also continue the process of rewriting the city's zoning code for more modern development. The city's single-family residential, particularly the R-50 district, and general business zoning need updates to accommodate modern development. The community has a strong desire for a walkable city, so as zoning codes are rewritten and map amendments are made, the city should ensure each neighborhood has walking access to commercial areas.



Artist rendering of medium-density residential housing that could be permitted under amended residential zoning codes.

PACE Program

The city provides many necessary services to residents including fire, EMS, police, and water, but one service not directly provided by the city is power. Electricity is provided to residents by private firms. Although the city tries to help lower costs through a citywide aggregation program, electricity can still be costly. Encouraging residential green energy generation through solar panels can not only help the environment but also reduce electricity costs, improve property values, and strengthen the city's resiliency from natural disasters. A Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program is a partnership between the city and a local financial institution to provide low-interest loans for the installation of residential solar panels. The program would help make solar panels affordable for residents, support a local business, and create a new revenue stream for the city without raising taxes. In a PACE arrangement, the homeowner would secure a loan from the financial institution, and the loan would be secured by the city and repaid through property tax assessments. The city and the financial institution then share in the profits generated by interest on the loan. At an average cost of \$20,000, the widespread installation of solar panels could also provide a significant property valuation increase in the city for the benefit of the school district.

The city should consider the establishment of a local PACE program. Preliminary conversations with some local financial institutions have revealed interest in partnering with the city on such a program.

Opening the Door

The final piece for the city to guide future redevelopment is through opening the door to new businesses. The easier and simpler it is for new businesses and residents to move to North Canton, find what they need, and establish themselves in the community the more likely they are to stay. The city can be more welcoming to residents and businesses in several ways.

Welcome Packets

Although it seems simple, a welcome packet of key information needed for a business to open can be extremely helpful to new businesses, particularly those locally owned. Similarly, new residents seek information about signing up for utilities, paying taxes, and registering children for school. The city should create both webpages and physical packets that welcome new residents and businesses to the community, provide key information they need to get services, and helpful tips or frequently asked questions. It is likely that some current residents and businesses may also benefit from having this information available.

The Dry City Problem

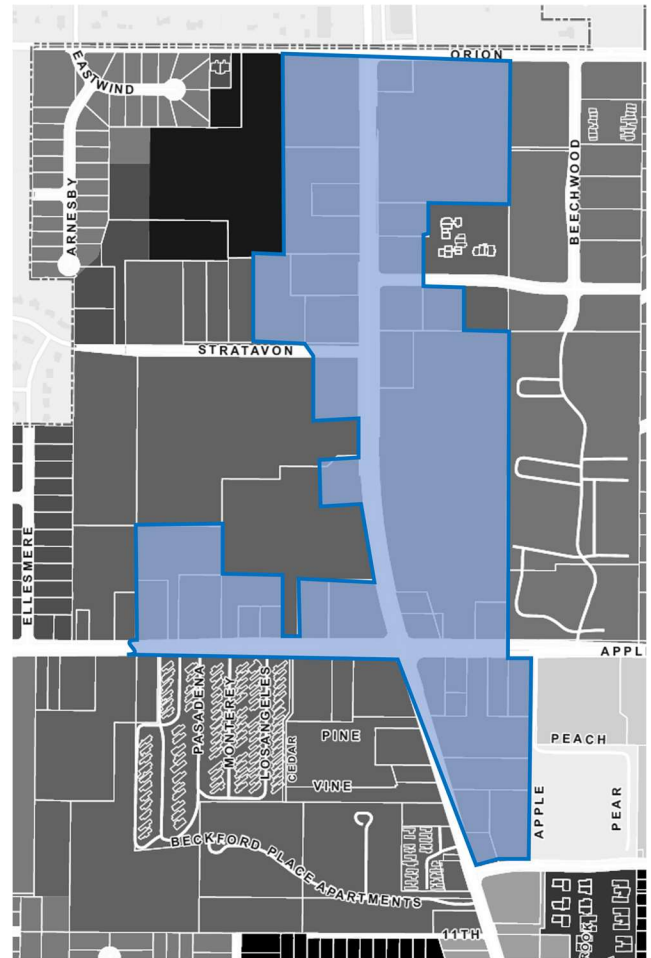
Although many residents may not know it, the entirety of North Canton is legally dry. This means that the sale of alcohol is prohibited unless authorized by voters through an election. This dry status can be a deterrent to businesses seeking to locate in North Canton and may explain why many businesses, such as restaurants, that require liquor sales to operate, chose to locate outside the city. These types of businesses encourage people to remain downtown, ideally for 30 minutes or more. Coffee shops, restaurants, and nightlife destinations are all among the best options for downtown vitality. With them, they bring music and nightlife, public art, galleries, performances, and specialty shops that rely on the generated traffic for customers. The established Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) supports downtown businesses with existing liquor permits but does little to attract new ones. To encourage more businesses to locate in North Canton, the city should take steps to reduce the barriers to obtaining liquor permits.

Entertainment District

A first step towards bringing in more restaurants could be the establishment of a Community Entertainment District (CED). Under a CED the city would control up to fifteen exclusive D-5 permits (beer, wine, and liquor consumed on the premises). The city can award these permits to businesses within the CED in order to allow them to operate without going before the voters. This could act as a first step to bring businesses into the community and allow them to begin operating before going to the voters for a regular permit. This would reduce the risk for business owners looking to locate in the city and allow the community to get to know the business and how it operates before voting on whether to grant a regular permit. CED's may be up to 75 acres and the city may establish multiple CEDs. Most of North Canton's North Gateway could be completely covered with just one 73.8 Acres district, as shown here.

Lifting the Dry City Designation

Long term, the city, both leaders and voters, should consider if remaining dry is still in the best interest of the residents and the city's continued growth and development. Lifting this requirement would require separate petitions and ballot issues in each precinct of the city and may be a long piecemeal process. However, lifting the requirements could go a long way toward attracting businesses from surrounding townships where geographic liquor permit limitations are currently making it difficult to locate new restaurants. Nearly every precinct in the city already has operating businesses with liquor permits and that number is only likely to increase. The most recent liquor-related ballot issues also indicate public support for "wet" initiatives. In both the 2022 and 2019 elections all local liquor option elections were adopted by more than 60% of voters. In 2022 specifically, there was nearly 70% support for every permit presented to voters across three precincts and in three different wards.



Northern Gateway

The City's North Gateway District, which is centered around the intersection of Applegrove and Main Street, is one of the most important commercial centers in the city. There are several major projects in the works for the area including redevelopment of the old Kmart site, the creation of a new community park, and the redevelopment of surrounding lots. The North Gateway District has close access to the I-77 corridor and attracts the most vehicle traffic of any part of the city. It's likely that growth in this area will encourage additional redevelopment in the surrounding area, and investment in the area will help the city capitalize on what is perhaps the City's best opportunity to grow the local income tax.



SERVICES

2023 City Master Plan

City of North Canton, Ohio



SERVICES

North Canton has long had a reputation for providing excellent services to its community. In the 2021 community survey, city services had an average sixty-seven percent satisfaction rating among residents. The city's great challenge moving forward will be maintaining the same high level of service as the city, and its population, continue to expand.

Safety Services

The city's emergency services, police and fire/EMS, are consistently the most highly rated in the city receiving eighty-five percent and eighty-seven percent satisfaction ratings respectively in 2021. However, the facilities these departments operate from are not adequate to meet their current needs. Both the main police and Fire stations were built in 1970 for much smaller departments. While the departments have made do with limited expansion, including the conversion of a former parks garage into an EMS station, the facilities will not be able to meet the city's needs in the long term.

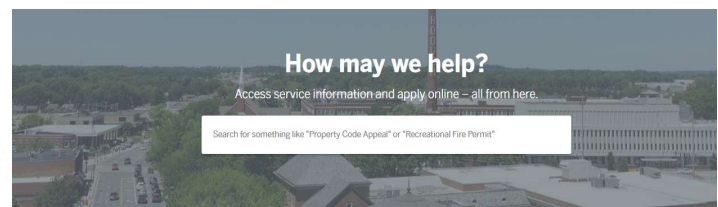
The city should continue to pursue efforts for the construction of new police and fire/EMS facilities that will better accommodate the needs of the departments now, and the needs of future anticipated growth. The city has already acquired some property that may be suitable for this purpose. A more in-depth analysis, likely with the aid of professional consultants, will be necessary to choose the best location and design a facility(s) that appropriately houses the departments.

Development Services

The department most consistently rated poorly on community surveys is the Department of Development Services (permits and building). North Canton's permitting process, unfortunately, developed a reputation over the past ten to fifteen years of being difficult to work with. Antiquated codes, restrictive zoning, and burdensome processes made pulling permits and starting a business difficult. Although North Canton has made progress in streamlining its zoning and review processes, a perception remains that the city is a difficult place to open a business. By demonstrating a willingness to cut through red tape and improve existing processes, the city can change this perception.

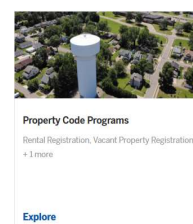
Online Permitting

North Canton currently lacks the ability to complete the permitting process electronically through a one-stop web portal. At present, permittees must download a pdf application and complete it, then mail, email, or bring it back to the permits department. The city's payment portal does not link to the permit being paid for such as putting it in a "cart". This means online payers frequently over- or under-pay as they guess at the appropriate amount to pay. Finally, permittees cannot track the progress of their permits under review or easily and quickly renew annual permits such as recreational fire permits. The city should work to create a digital portal through which residents can apply, pay for, and monitor their permits with the city, potentially without ever needing to come into City Hall. This would make the process easier for residents, streamline staff time, and reduce manual entry tasks.



Discover Online Services

Choose below to browse services by department



Property Code Enforcement

The department of development services also performs code enforcement functions for the city. This service was the lowest-rated service on the 2021 survey with just thirty-six percent of residents being satisfied. The city has taken steps to address this issue by hiring additional code officers, passing a new property code, and establishing a rental registration program. The city must ensure that these programs are effective by continually monitoring their performance. Long-term, the city should also consider expanding rental registration to include large commercial housing properties in addition to the smaller properties covered under the current code.

Regulation Review

As a final part of improving the city's reputation for the permitting process, the city should continue its process of overhauling outdated regulations. The city has already piece by piece rewritten nearly fifty percent of its zoning code in the last two years. The city should create a small task force to review existing regulations not just for zoning, but also businesses, public spaces, and general permitting to identify ways to make regulations more flexible and streamlined and approval requirements less burdensome. The goal would be to keep the city safe and orderly without creating a bloated red-tape-ridden process.

The Next Utility: Community Broadband

Access to the internet in the modern age seems just as important as clean water and working sewers. As the world's technological capabilities expand digital infrastructure will play an increasingly important role in North Canton's economic prosperity development and quality of life. Connectivity is essential for business development, education, healthcare, education, and home life. Better, faster, less expensive internet access could bring new residents and businesses to North Canton. Broadband service expands home entertainment options and internet connectivity, which is important for attracting younger homebuyers, making telecommuting more feasible, and enabling tech businesses to operate.

Cities across Ohio have expanded their internet infrastructure in thoughtful, forward-looking ways. These municipal networks have created local government savings, increased speeds, promoted service competition, and powered economic development. For example, the city of Hudson has been building out its broadband network incrementally for years, bringing fast, affordable, and reliable service to area businesses. This service is newly available to residents, and it provides faster speeds and more value than existing services. North Canton should explore the possibility of establishing its own municipal broadband service to attract and keep business, support Walsh university, and improve the quality of life for residents.

As a first step, the city should adopt clear broadband goals for the city. It is the recommendation of this plan that any municipal broadband be operated as a separate entity similar to Fairlawn's FairlawnGig. If authorized, initial projects should focus on designated areas with high potential usage, such as the Main and Maple corridors. In preliminary conversations, Walsh University has already expressed interest in being a customer if the city were to offer fiber-optic service. Over time, service and lines could then be expanded incrementally similar to the strategy used by Hudson. Once the city is clear about its goals, the next step is to develop an implementation plan. This plan would identify the people, resources, and funding needed to start a Municipal Broadband project. This may include the creation of a public-private partnership or other legal arrangements to make the project feasible and pool funding from multiple locations. To identify partners for building out a broadband network, the city can start by talking to existing telecom and internet providers in North Canton, including AT&T and Spectrum. The goal would be to find local providers who are willing to work with the city to meet the community's needs.

Funding Sources

Now may be an unprecedented moment for North Canton to explore the possibility of municipal broadband as a public utility. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and, to a lesser extent, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) both earmark billions of dollars in funding for broadband, digital connectivity devices, and multi-purpose community facilities that directly enable work, education, and health monitoring. Eligible broadband projects must provide service upon completion that meets or exceeds 100 Mbps symmetrical service. States are encouraged to prioritize investment in fiber-optic infrastructure and to prioritize broadband infrastructure owned, operated, or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and/or cooperatives. To make use of this funding an initial phase of the project must be substantially complete, and funds must be expended by December 31, 2026.

IMPLEMENTATION

The City of North Canton 2023 Master Plan outlines the goals and projects of the city over the next ten to twenty years which include building a vibrant downtown core, cultivating a business-friendly community, strengthening the North Canton community identity, and maintaining and improving high standards for city Services. Some of the recommendations from this plan are already in motion, while others will take a while to realize. Many will likely require the assistance of professional consultants. This Master Plan is a roadmap for the future and should improve the lives of all residents of North Canton.

The implementation plan outlines a series of actions, expected outcomes, and a time frame for accomplishing the actions. Each action could take a different amount of time to implement, however, there are intentional estimates to guide projects. The timeframes for implementation include:

- Short-Term actions (0-2 years)
- Medium-Term actions (3-5 years)
- Long-Term actions (5+ years)
- Ongoing Efforts

This timeframe reflects the fact that some actions build on others. Funding for the recommendations in this plan will come from a variety of sources, including potential public/private partnerships.

Table of Recommendations

PAGE	ACTION	TIME FRAME
7	The Pedestrian Square	Medium-Term Actions
9	Expand DORA Boundaries	Medium-Term Actions
9	Marketing and Coordination Position	Short-Term Actions
9	Pedestrian Centric Parking	Long-Term Actions
10	Community Beautification Awards	Short-Term Actions
10	Programs for Older Residents	Ongoing Effort
11	Street Scape on East Maple	Medium-Term Actions
13	Special Improvement District	Medium-Term Actions
14	Business Surveys and Workshops	Short-Term Actions
14	Façade Grants	Long-Term Actions
15	Strategic Land Banking	Ongoing Effort
15	Modify CRA Program	Medium-Term Actions
16	Expand Commercial Zoning	Short-Term Actions
18	Zoning Code Review	Ongoing Effort
18	Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program	Long-Term Actions
19	Entertainment District	Medium-Term Actions
20	Removal of Dry City	Long-Term Actions
21	Safety Services Facilities	Long-Term Actions
21	Online Permitting	Ongoing Effort
22	Improved Property Code Enforcement	Ongoing Effort
23	Review Zoning and Business Regulations	Short-Term Actions
22	Community Broadband	Long-Term Actions